

Written Comments Submitted by Eric Kimmel

From: Looprd

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Subject: Fwd: Comments for the record

To the ORV Advisory Committee I am writing this letter to the ORV committee because in this time of economic downturn and high fuel costs I cannot afford to miss work again and drive the 180 mile round trip to attend the ORV meeting, as much as I want to be there, and I ask that my letter serve as the voice of my family in my absence.

Please enter into the record the following comments for the March 18, 2008 meeting

Minutes

I am concerned that minutes of the ORV meetings might not be complete I feel detailed notes of oral public comment and Committee deliberations should be included in the minutes because the whole world is following the BICY ORV issue. The public is giving up time and money from both work and family to attend these meetings the comments of all those attending should be recorded.

Issue of some concern.

Due to some recent responses I have had recently from the NPS I believe that the ORV advisory board may be used by the NPS to stall or deflect issues that could be handled quicker and without having to wait for advisory board meeting especially as these meetings will not be of great frequency as well as the box it is confined to work within.

Issues of importance that I would also like to see some work on.

Youth

Make adaptive management changes to the ORV Plan that is contributing to the loss of our culture by discriminating against unlicensed chaperoned minors by preventing them from accompanying their parents, grandparents and older siblings on visits to the preserve's backcountry on ATVs. I have found it interesting the range of excuses for banning youth from the ORV program which in my opinion is a form of cultural cleansing. When the ORV plan first banned our youth from participating the excuse from the Superintendent at the time was that the NPS believed that our children could not handle real time or stressful situations. In turn I showed the NPS that this is a false

notion my children could ride nearly any horse. We had a PasoFino bred for show and a quarter horses used for both barrel racing and roping events and my kids handled them quite well and also worked with my sisters Andalusia's. You cannot get any more real time than handling a spirited animal with a mind of its own. I also presented the fact that there are 4H programs all over the country sponsoring ORV and motocross classes and events. It is also legal under Florida law for unlicensed minors to operate ORVs.

The next excuse was that they were following a consumer product safety organization or some such organizations reasons that ORV use was unsafe.

This is where I came to the conclusion that the ban of our youth was just a part of the cultural cleansing program that the NPS incrementally been trying to destroy our culture with. I find it odd that the NPS supports and allows minors to snow board, snow ski, bicycle, horseback riding but bans our traditional cultural use of ORVs by our minor children. If you follow consumer product safety and other organizations guidelines you would find that nearly all of our outdoor recreation pastimes are hazardous. But the NPS is discriminating against our culture and banning our youth is a step towards ensuring that our culture dies.

The type of youth riding opportunity I am trying to restore is adult supervised passive access for family recreation such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, nature appreciation, camping and so on. This is a rite of passage for young people of our culture, it builds confidence, fosters self reliance (being able to build and repair your own buggy, airboat or ATC, finding you way in the backcountry) and most importantly it instills in the young person a love of the natural world.

There has been a misconception or perhaps deliberate misinformation that portrays ATV access in the Preserve as dangerous, rip-roaring, hell-raising, romp and stomp racing around and slinging mud. That type of ATV use is not traditional to the Preserve; it is viewed with contempt and disdain by the Gladesman culture. Our vehicles are considered tools as well as a lifeline and we cannot afford to break down Those who operate in the manner described above are fools and to me it would be appropriately illegal for operators of any age to operate a vehicle in that manner.

As written, the ORV plan puts parents in a no-win Catch-22 situation. It prohibits parents who rely on ATV transportation to access the preserve (and who cannot afford the new and very costly two-passenger ATVs) from riding their minor children double with them during family outings. And it also prohibits young people--even those under direct parental supervision--from accompanying their parents and older siblings on family outings. This robs parents of the ability to convey their values, customs, traditions, and cultural heritage to their off-spring

The 60 day closure needs to be done away with. Please note that while summertime is hot and miserable to some folks it brought endless months of enjoyment for my family and friends especially our youth who had summers off from school and could stay most of the summer in the Cypress. This time was spent both riding and maintaining their ORVs sightseeing observing wildlife, learning about nature, and scouting areas for hunting season. The summers provided an important part of their development as

Gladesmen and the continuation of our culture. Florida has a year round growing season so the limited use we have will have little if any impact on the sustainability of the trails. It is also important to note that allowing this would not result in a great increase of use only those hearty enough to endure the life our parents and grand parents knew.

The 10 P.M curfew has also damaged the culture and our traditional activities and should also be addressed. Frogging has all but been eliminated because the curfew kicks in before the frogs are up. And for some of us there is nothing more romantic than taking your sweetheart for a midnight airboat or buggy ride to see the stars in the night sky.

The 10 P.M curfew prevents working people from enjoying the backcountry for hunting, camping or any of the activities I already mentioned. By the time a working person gets off of and home from work which can be anywhere from 4 to whenever depending on traffic loads his gear, his buggy or airboat drives back through town traffic to one of the very few access points left in the Preserve he or she cannot get to the back country before the curfew. This is contrary to what Representative C. Pepper wanted. He only supported the Big Cypress National Preserve because it was a place a working man could go. He was approached by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Pepper was a bit Union supporter, and they supported him. This was the only way to get him to support taking 570,000 acres of private land and making the BICY. Source; Cal Stone who was in the IBEW

ORV access from front country camp sites

Monument Lake has a hard road (Access point 10A), it's on the Oct 24, 2000 interim ORV map which has a sign official use only or something to that effect .The park service put rock on that old buggy trail and named it 10A.

This would provide buggy access to those who chose to camp at the lake by connecting to the Monroe Station trail. Those who camp with ORV's at Monument Lake would have to trailer them to Monroe Station to unload. There's no valid reason for not allowing back country ORV access from the camp grounds.

Fully involved and access to all information with all stages of NPS Processes Including inter-agency Correspondence

I give this for an example: We have worked a number of years on Zone four the NPS has finished groundtruthing and evaluating of some candidate trails and completed a draft conceptual map and forwarded it to US Fish and wildlife service for comment. Several time we requested to assist or be involved with the groundtruthing so that those with the most experience here could be in the field when decisions were made we were turned down. Now after years of working on this the NPS has tabled further consideration of trail implantation in zone 4 pending the outcome of the Bear Island lawsuit. I can understand waiting on the lawsuit to some extent but after the amount of time we have put into this The NPS has refused to provide us with copies of the information and the conceptual map sent to USFWS for consideration. I even asked under the Freedom of Information Act and have been refused. By the time we the public receive this information any changes or discrepancies that could have been fixed in the field with our involvement instead once it is released for public review any changes possibly would

require we start a new process. So again the culture is stuck with take what we offer or wait another 3 or 4 years to get something. What is the NPS hiding?

I thought we had a good working relationship with the current administration in the BICY and still believe Superintendent Karen Gustin and staff is the best ever and I have had great respect for but unfortunately the stalling of plans and the hiding information is still being practiced.

Thank you for consideration of my comments

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